

Circle K International: Membership Analytics Report and Strategic Plan

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Thesis Advisor

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Muncie, Indiana**

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Abstract

Circle K International is the world's largest student-led collegiate service organization. However, over the past 5 years there has been an overall decline in membership and clubs. This thesis serves as an analytics report of the membership trends within the organization and a strategic plan to tackle these membership issues. I analyze trends within specific areas of the US and Canada, and make suggestions regarding potential stakeholders and partners on college campuses and communities, as well as marketing suggestions for the organization overall.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Circle K International Specialist Heather McAlister for advising me through this project. Her help during this long and difficult task was only a small fraction of the help and guidance I received during my four-year college career.

I would like also to thank Circle K International Director, Executive Committee, and International Board for allowing me to present my materials and plan for the future of this organization.

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Process Analysis Statement

This thesis started with a personal interest in Circle K International from the International President. Overall, this organization faces many struggles, membership being a large one. In order to combat this struggle, this thesis looks into membership trends and data to create a strategic plan and suggestions of current and future partners, as well as marketing efforts.

To begin the thesis, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis was conducted. This was done in the effort to help understand where the member's perspective is regarding Circle K International. Several areas indicated there are currently some weaknesses and threats to the organization that should be addressed to allow membership the best experience and remain in the organization throughout their collegiate years.

The main research conducted centered around membership and clubs throughout the organization. Not only was overall membership taken into account, but also the information was broke down into individual areas, or "districts" as known within the organization. Only districts within the United States and Canada were taken into account due to the wide diversity of issues outside of those areas that could contribute to membership decline or rise. Moving forward, data from these districts was collected for the past five years. The five-year span was done to take into account that there may be large differences that can occur from year to year depending on student leadership within the area. Looking into a five-year range gave a better understanding of the club and membership struggles as a whole for each area. After analyzing the percent decrease over the past five years, it was clear that overall there was a large decline in membership that needed to be addressed.

Next, six different districts were indicated based on their percent increase or decrease of membership. After looking into those districts' system and how they function regarding their clubs and members, a strategic plan was created to tackle those specific trends of deficits. While the strategic plan is a good stepping stone, it is always good to also look into partners or stakeholders to help your organization along the way, as well as how you market and brand your organization to people outside the

organization. A list of suggestions and thoughts are at the end of the thesis to help Circle K International objectively look into those areas as well. Overall this thesis delves into a reoccurring issue within Circle K International, as well as other organizations on collegiate campuses.



CIRCLE K INTERNATIONAL

**MEMBERSHIP ANALYTICS REPORT
AND STRATEGIC PLAN 2017**

SENIOR THESIS

My name is Shayna Cole, and I am a graduating senior at Ball State University. I have been a member of Circle K International for four years and have conducted my senior honors thesis to center around membership within this organization. This project interested me because I have served in many leadership positions in the past in this organization, and I currently serve as the International President for the 2016-17 year.

Overall, membership is an important aspect of any organization. However membership within the world's largest student-led collegiate service organization deserves some attention. I hope this analytics report and strategic plan helps to serve the organization as a tool to develop strategies and tactics to continue its great success and build upon it.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From October of 2016 to March of 2017 I have worked closely with Circle K International (CKI) by analyzing its trends in membership for the past 5 years, not only throughout the organization as a whole, but also separated by district. My goal was to find specific ways CKI could increase and sustain its membership through strategic planning.

Throughout my research, I looked at the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats in regards to CKI and its collegiate membership. I used several different sources throughout my research such as the Membership Services department at Kiwanis International and Circle K International staff including International Director Jameson Root and CKI Specialist Heather McAlister.

After collecting data and understanding the position CKI was in, I started to create content for them to work off of to help CKI's efforts to raise membership. My proposal is a strategic plan regarding outreach, recruitment, retention, and education efforts.

Near the end of my partnership with CKI, I was invited to present my work to the Executive Committee as well as the International Board of Trustees to give feedback on the organization's trends and previous membership efforts.

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

Circle K International (CKI) was founded in 1936 as a service leadership program of Kiwanis International (adult service organization). CKI is a specific branch of the "Kiwanis Family" for collegiate students. CKI is the world's largest student-led collegiate service organization being represented in **18 countries, 500 clubs, and 14,000 members**. CKI focuses on developing student leaders while touching on all three of their tenets: Service, Leadership, and Fellowship.

This organization values service as one of its main tenets. CKI served a total of **257,904** hours as an organization this past year alone. CKI is structured to allow leadership opportunities on multiple levels. The organization is broken into quadrants, then subregions, then districts, then divisions, then clubs. This system allows membership to develop as leaders. Finally, CKI puts a major emphasis on growing friendships through socials and interclubs to ensure fellowship across the organization.



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SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- 1) Membership can receive a valuable experience to refer to on resumés.
- 2) Membership can receive a fulfilling social life and connections.
- 3) Membership can develop pride in their campus and local community.
- 4) Membership can begin a lifelong commitment to service with our Kiwanis Family.

WEAKNESSES

- 1) Membership has narrow diversity.
- 2) Membership has a large time commitment.
- 3) Membership undergoes financial burden with dues and other expenses.
- 4) Membership has a weak understanding of the organization as a whole, and the many opportunities.

OPPORTUNITIES

- 1) Membership can take advantage of networking opportunities with Kiwanis counterparts.
- 2) Membership can take advantage of leadership development events and training.
- 3) Membership can take advantage of travel opportunities.
- 4) Membership can take advantage of scholarships and discounts exclusively for CKI members.

THREATS

- 1) The Greek Community and other service leadership organizations.
- 2) Student employment requiring a large time commitment from students.
- 3) CKI current membership population.
- 4) Downward trends in economy and financial issues with the collegiate student community.



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STRENGTHS

CKI provides members with valuable experience to utilize in interviews and resumés. Members can receive many social connections and friendships develop more often than not. Additionally, performing service with CKI can get members involved on their campus and in their communities where they may not have otherwise. Finally, members can continue on the Kiwanis Family and develop a lifelong commitment to service through CKI.

WEAKNESSES

Membership within CKI is currently low in diversity. This can be a deterrent for others. CKI can also be considered a huge time commitment if you truly want to receive all the benefits, which is difficult as a collegiate student to balance. Additionally, there is a cost to being a member that can range for \$8.00 to \$40.00 depending on where you are in the world. Finally, CKI membership does not have a consistent understanding of the many opportunities and advantages this organization provides.

OPPORTUNITIES

There are many opportunities for membership to take advantage of including: professional networking, leadership training, travel opportunities, and scholarships or discounts for our membership. These opportunities are in addition and require membership to seek out these opportunities on their own.

THREATS

Other service organizations compete with CKI on college campuses for membership. If these organizations are more well known then CKI can suffer. Additionally, student employment is popular for students and can limit the amount of extra time students have to join organizations. The current CKI membership can either make or break a new member's experience and deter new members from joining. Finally, financial issues in the collegiate setting cause students to struggle. 7

CKI Membership Growth Trends

District	2011-12		2012-13		2013-14		2014-15	
	Clubs	Members	Clubs	Members	Clubs	Members	Clubs	Members
Alabama	11	339	13	373	12	355	15	323
Cal-Nev-Ha	58	2,616	54	2,797	57	3,142	59	3,234
Capital	25	1,036	26	868	27	735	31	780
Caribbean-Atlantic		103	23	180	26	142	21	119
Carolinas	12	537	15	431	15	413	14	283
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Kentucky-Tennessee	4	60	5	135	8	212	8	172
La-Miss-Tenn	13	249	9	168	8	122	6	97
Michigan	14	547	14	514	11	516	12	475
Minnesota-Dakotas	11	273	10	264	11	275	9	221
Missouri-Arkansas	8	172	9	259	10	251	12	206
Montana	6	101	6	66	4	46	4	59
Nebraska-Iowa	9	239	8	227	10	261	8	144
New England	13	354	12	463	11	493	15	436
New Jersey	9	353	11	476	10	423	11	372
New York	32	1,092	32	969	35	1,092	36	1,150
Ohio	19	457	19	397	19	473	21	483
Pacific Northwest	19	384	19	367	17	371	18	475
Pennsylvania	26	725	26	786	28	769	28	713
Rocky Mountain	5	87	5	121	5	99	6	141
Southwest	7	192	7	156	7	197	7	145
Texas-Oklahoma	23	418	19	419	17	357	19	444
Utah-Idaho	4	60	3	60	4	71	5	72
West Virginia	5	96	5	98	3	43	4	62
Western Canada	3	90	3	73	3	85	4	151
Wisconsin Upper-Michigan	17	542	18	516	20	664	21	567
Yearly Totals	497	13,773	453	13,159	456	13,849	475	13,350

District	2015-16		2016-17*			5-Year	5-year %
	Clubs	Members	Paid Clubs	Sus. Clubs	Members	Members	Members
Alabama	15	454	15	4	392	53	16%
Cal-Nev-Ha	58	3,238	60	8	3,018	402	15%
Capital	32	826	26	7	617	-419	-40%
Caribbean-Atlantic	20	149	6	11	204	101	98%
Carolinas	17	427	13	3	357	-180	-34%
Eastern Canada	8	86	5	1	88	-362	-80%
Florida	17	479	19	3	475	69	17%
Georgia	14	310	16	1	394	66	20%
Illinois-Eastern Iowa	15	282	14	1	308	-104	-25%
Indiana	23	680	21	4	515	-172	-25%
Kansas	8	165	7	1	140	-5	-3%
Kentucky-Tennessee	11	148	10	1	176	116	193%
La-Miss-Tenn	8	197	7	1	190	-59	-24%
Michigan	15	557	15	2	491	-56	-10%
Minnesota-Dakotas	8	252	8	0	247	-26	-10%
Missouri-Arkansas	13	183	10	3	148	-24	-14%
Montana	4	59	4	0	54	-47	-47%
Nebraska-Iowa	7	103	7	1	139	-100	-42%
New England	13	401	11	3	235	-119	-34%
New Jersey	10	316	9	2	314	-39	-11%
New York	37	1,044	36	2	893	-199	-18%
Ohio	20	410	16	4	333	-124	-27%
Pacific Northwest	18	448	16	6	463	79	21%
Pennsylvania	29	750	25	3	636	-89	-12%
Rocky Mountain	7	167	5	2	79	-8	-9%
Southwest	5	147	5	0	148	-44	-23%
Texas-Oklahoma	26	613	27	5	709	291	70%
Utah-Idaho	5	69	1	5	12	-48	-80%
West Virginia	4	62	2	2	39	-57	-59%
Western Canada	5	179	5	0	129	39	43%
Wisconsin Upper - Michigan	18	464	19	0	485	-57	-11%
Yearly Totals	490	13,665	440	86	12,428	-1345	-10%

MEMBERSHIP ANALYSIS

While still remaining as the world's largest student-led collegiate service organization, overall membership within CKI has taken a 10% drop in the last 5 years. This is an extreme drop if CKI continues this path for the next 5 years. As an organization, we need to analyze probable causes and develop strategies to overcome these issues.

Within the US and Canada, 22 out of the 31 districts have dropped in membership over the past 5 years. When looking closer into the positive versus negative membership trends, I found 6 districts to focus on: Capital, Caribbean, Eastern Canada, Kentucky-Tennessee, Texas-Oklahoma, and Utah-Idaho.

Capital, Eastern Canada, and Utah-Idaho all have over 40% drop in membership. Although there are other districts that fall in this percentage, these districts have a trend of probable causes such as 1) little or no officer training, 2) small representation and interaction within the clubs, or 3) struggle with Key Club recruitment.

Caribbean, Kentucky-Tennessee, and Texas-Oklahoma all have over 70% raise in membership. These districts have similar positive trends within their districts due to probable causes such as 1) clear communication about the dues process, 2) offer not only club officer education but general membership education tools, or 3) capitalize and connect with graduating Key Clubbers.

There are also districts that have made large jumps both positively and negatively in membership over the past 5 years which truly shows how elected student leadership can affect membership highly from year to year. This emphasizes the importance of leadership education and training practices to enable students to lead in the roles of our current organization's structure. From these trends, I have found 3 priorities of focus for the organization regarding its membership.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Target Goal: To increase International membership of 25% (3,144) over the next 3 years.

Priority One: Outreach with Key Club International Membership

Goal: Capitalize on high school involvement in Kiwanis International by continual outreach efforts.

- ❑ Revamp the "Key to College" program to encompass day-long events, addressing collegiate orientation hosted by Circle Ker's for graduating Key Clubbers.
- ❑ Utilize the Key Club International Alumni Association survey by adding questions to track future paths of Key Clubbers.

Priority Two: Thorough Recruitment & Retention Efforts

Goal: Provide extensive recruitment & retention training for clubs.

- ❑ Conduct an international club presidents retreat available before CKIx (international convention) to focus on leadership development.
- ❑ Create an abundance of standardized materials for social media promotion, involvement fair tabling, interest meeting presentations, and follow up actions.
- ❑ Establish relationship building and social connection workshops for conferences.
- ❑ Invest in leadership engagement and new opportunities such as Leadership Academy or CKI Alternative Break programs.

Priority Three: Standardized Education

Goal: Develop a standardized curriculum for the new and returning members.

- ❑ Implement a new member orientation including topic videos and facilitator guides to spread a consistent international message and brand.
- ❑ Construct a continuing education program that returning membership can participate in to have ongoing leadership development available for the individual member.
- ❑ Revamp Club Leadership Education (CLE) to encompass more current club officer structure and directives.

STAKEHOLDERS & PARTNERS

Stakeholders and partners play a vital role in the membership of CKI. Without dedicated key individuals, the organization would not be successful. As an organization we should increase our focus on campus and community stakeholders and partners to make CKI an integral part of campus and community life for our members and who they interact.

STAKEHOLDERS ON CAMPUS

Student Government : Allows CKI clubs to ask for funds to participate in conferences and conventions.

Student Affairs Office: Gives CKI clubs support and direction regarding campus activities and needs for service opportunities.

Housing and Residence Life: Helps bring awareness of service clubs like CKI to the freshmen community.

Advising Offices: Presents CKI and other service organizations to students with majors that include service requirements.

STAKEHOLDERS IN THE COMMUNITY

Kiwanis Clubs: Supports CKI clubs financially and through networking & mentorship programs.

Local Government: Communicates community needs from a governmental standpoint and allows CKI to get involved in the community.

PARTNERS ON CAMPUS

Greek Life: Provides fundraising and service opportunities for CKI members.

Alternative Break Programs: Increases service opportunities for CKI members to serve outside of their direct campus's community.

PARTNERS IN THE COMMUNITY

General Community Partnerships (United Way, Toastmasters, etc.): Boosts CKI's branding and name recognition with the potential for more publicity through publications.

Junior Chamber International: Presents opportunities for CKI membership to focus on networking, professional development, international policy, and travel.

MARKETING EFFORTS

Kiwanis International noticed a membership decrease over the past few years and chose to develop their own campaign to address the issue. Kiwanis International developed the **Kiwanis Formula** program. This program focuses on the idea of recruitment and strategies to upgrade and enhance recruitment. The program has the following sections:

- ❑ **Love it:** "Love it" addresses the fact that Kiwanians have unique reasons why they became and remain members. It asks members to draw from what they love about Kiwanis to talk about Kiwanis with others.
- ❑ **Share it:** "Share it" component of The Formula encourages members to spread the word about their clubs.
- ❑ **Live it:** "Live it" is what happens when Kiwanis members love their Kiwanis experience and, by sharing it with others, strengthen their clubs and, subsequently, increase opportunities for incredible community service.

I would suggest Circle K International continue similar efforts such as our **My CKI Story** page which showcases current members' experiences within the organization. Additionally, I would suggest that CKI begins a new campaign within our marketing focused on **Why CKI?** This would serve as a way to showcase why current membership loves CKI, lives CKI, and shares CKI with their friends and peer groups.



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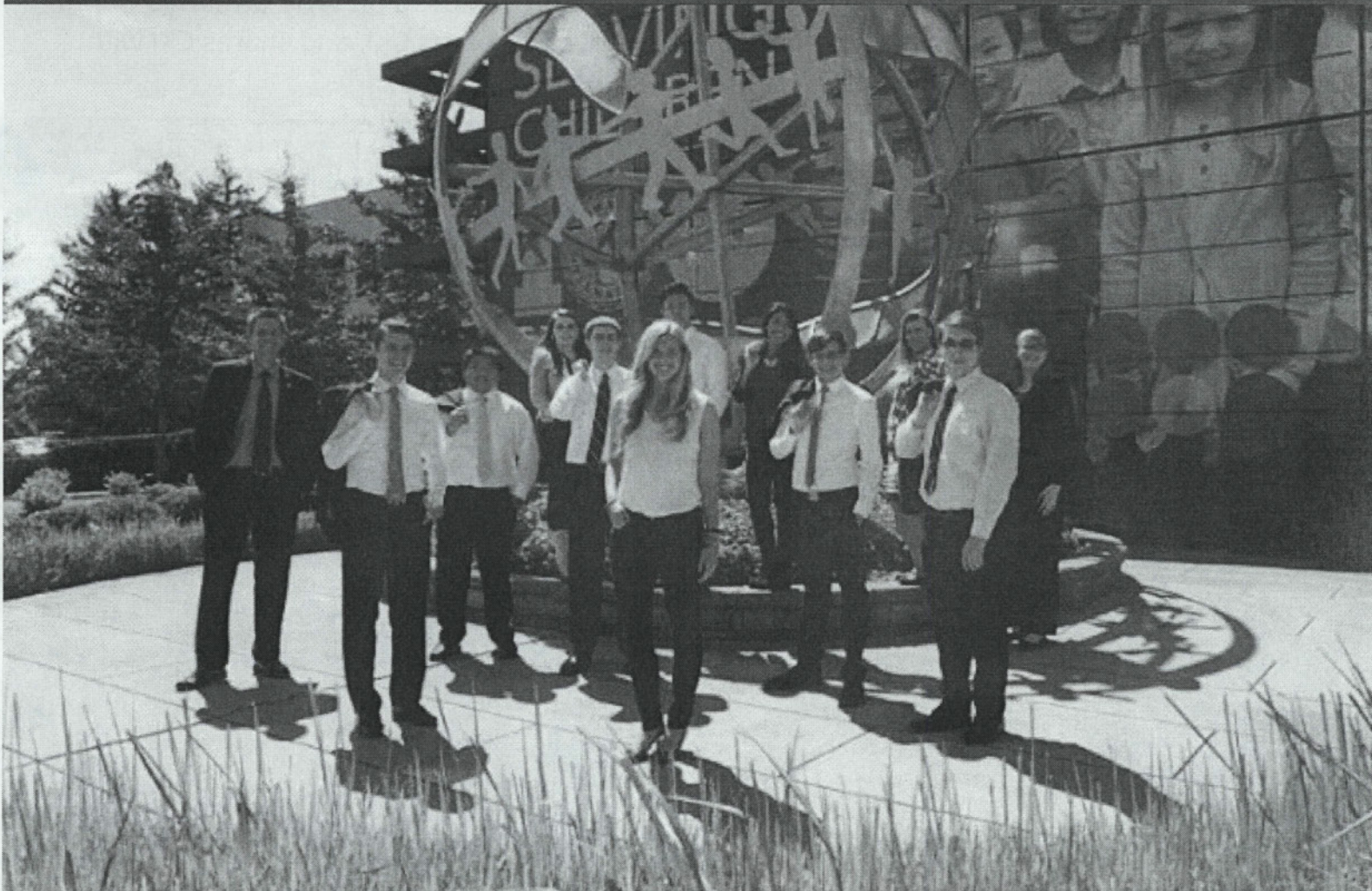
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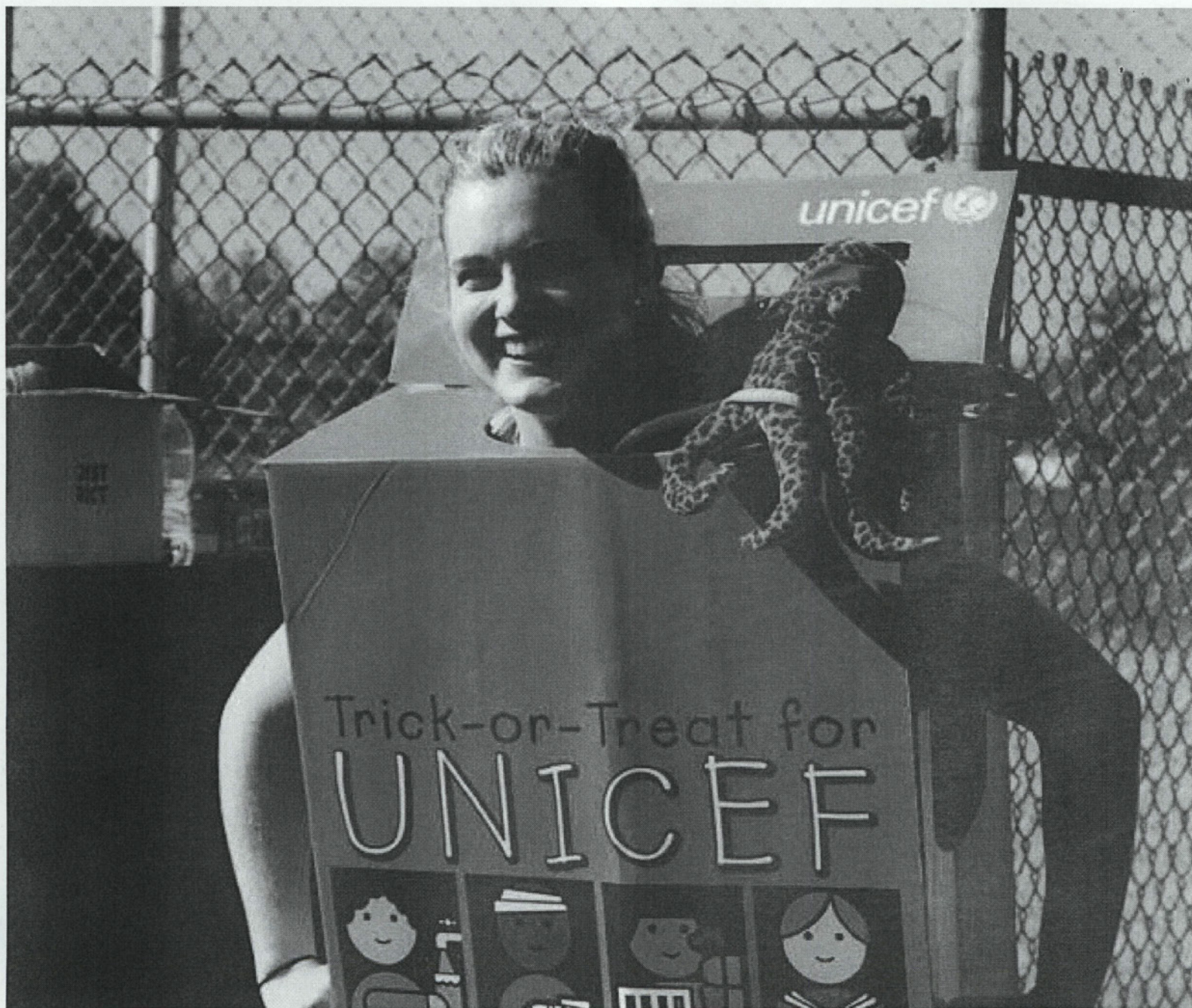
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THANK YOUS

I would like to thank my advisor, Heather McAlister for providing me with the contacts and resources needed to make this thesis possible. I would like to thank Membership Services at Kiwanis International for working with our clubs and membership to keep track of membership and trends throughout the organization.

Finally, I would like to thank the Circle K International Board, Executive Committee, and Director for allowing me to work with them regarding their membership and provide a possible strategic plan to tackle these issues.



SUBMITTED BY

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HONORS SENIOR THESIS, BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

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CIRCLE K INTERNATIONAL

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SWOT ANALYSIS

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Michigan	15	557	15	2	491	-56	-10%
Minnesota-Dakotas	8	252	8	0	247	-26	-10%
Missouri-Arkansas	13	183	10	3	148	-24	-14%
Montana	4	59	4	0	54	-47	-47%
Nebraska-Iowa	7	103	7	1	139	-100	-42%
New England	13	401	11	3	235	-119	-34%
New Jersey	10	316	9	2	314	-39	-11%
New York	37	1,044	36	2	893	-199	-18%
Ohio	20	410	16	4	333	-124	-27%
Pacific Northwest	18	448	16	6	463	79	21%
Pennsylvania	29	750	25	3	636	-89	-12%
Rocky Mountain	7	167	5	2	79	-8	-9%
Southwest	5	147	5	0	148	-44	-23%
Texas-Oklahoma	26	613	27	5	709	291	70%
Utah-Idaho	5	69	1	5	12	-48	-80%
West Virginia	4	62	2	2	39	-57	-59%
Western Canada	5	179	5	0	129	39	43%
Wisconsin Upper - Michigan	18	464	19	0	485	-57	-11%
Yearly Totals	490	13,665	440	86	12,428	-1345	-10%

MEMBERSHIP ANALYSIS

While still remaining as the world's largest student-led collegiate service organization, overall membership within CKI has taken a 10% drop in the last 5 years. This is an extreme drop if CKI continues this path for the next 5 years. As an organization, we need to analyze probable causes and develop strategies to overcome these issues.

Within the US and Canada, 22 out of the 31 districts have dropped in membership over the past 5 years. When looking closer into the positive versus negative membership trends, I found 6 districts to focus on: Capital, Caribbean, Eastern Canada, Kentucky-Tennessee, Texas-Oklahoma, and Utah-Idaho.

Capital, Eastern Canada, and Utah-Idaho all have over 40% drop in membership. Although there are other districts that fall in this percentage, these districts have a trend of probable causes such as 1) little or no officer training, 2) small representation and interaction within the clubs, or 3) struggle with Key Club recruitment.

Caribbean, Kentucky-Tennessee, and Texas-Oklahoma all have over 70% raise in membership. These districts have similar positive trends within their districts due to probable causes such as 1) clear communication about the dues process, 2) offer not only club officer education but general membership education tools, or 3) capitalize and connect with graduating Key Clubbers.

There are also districts that have made large jumps both positively and negatively in membership over the past 5 years which truly shows how elected student leadership can affect membership highly from year to year. This emphasizes the importance of leadership education and training practices to enable students to lead in the roles of our current organization's structure. From these trends, I have found 3 priorities of focus for the organization regarding its membership.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Target Goal: To increase International membership of 25% (3,144) over the next 3 years.

Priority One: Outreach with Key Club International Membership

Goal: Capitalize on high school involvement in Kiwanis International by continual outreach efforts.

- ❑ Revamp the "Key to College" program to encompass day-long events, addressing collegiate orientation hosted by Circle K's for graduating Key Clubbers.
- ❑ Utilize the Key Club International Alumni Association survey by adding questions to track future paths of Key Clubbers.

Priority Two: Thorough Recruitment & Retention Efforts

Goal: Provide extensive recruitment & retention training for clubs.

- ❑ Conduct an international club presidents retreat available before CKI (international convention) to focus on leadership development.
- ❑ Create an abundance of standardized materials for social media promotion, involvement fair tabling, interest meeting presentations, and follow up actions.
- ❑ Establish relationship building and social connection workshops for conferences.
- ❑ Invest in leadership engagement and new opportunities such as Leadership Academy or CKI Alternative Break programs.

Priority Three: Standardized Education

Goal: Develop a standardized curriculum for the new and returning members.

- ❑ Implement a new member orientation including topic videos and facilitator guides to spread a consistent international message and brand.
- ❑ Construct a continuing education program that returning membership can participate in to have ongoing leadership development available for the individual member.
- ❑ Revamp Club Leadership Education (CLE) to encompass more current club officer structure and directives.

STAKEHOLDERS & PARTNERS

Stakeholders and partners play a vital role in the membership of CKI. Without dedicated key individuals, the organization would not be successful. As an organization we should increase our focus on campus and community stakeholders and partners to make CKI an integral part of campus and community life for our members and who they interact.

STAKEHOLDERS ON CAMPUS

Student Government : Allows CKI clubs to ask for funds to participate in conferences and conventions.

Student Affairs Office: Gives CKI clubs support and direction regarding campus activities and needs for service opportunities.

Housing and Residence Life: Helps bring awareness of service clubs like CKI to the freshmen community.

Advising Offices: Presents CKI and other service organizations to students with majors that include service requirements.

STAKEHOLDERS IN THE COMMUNITY

Kiwanis Clubs: Supports CKI clubs financially and through networking & mentorship programs.

Local Government: Communicates community needs from a governmental standpoint and allows CKI to get involved in the community.

PARTNERS ON CAMPUS

Greek Life: Provides fundraising and service opportunities for CKI members.

Alternative Break Programs: Increases service opportunities for CKI members to serve outside of their direct campus's community.

PARTNERS IN THE COMMUNITY

General Community Partnerships (United Way, Toastmasters, etc.): Boosts CKI's branding and name recognition with the potential for more publicity through publications.

Junior Chamber International: Presents opportunities for CKI membership to focus on networking, professional development, international policy, and travel.

MARKETING EFFORTS

Kiwanis International noticed a membership decrease over the past few years and chose to develop their own campaign to address the issue. Kiwanis International developed the Kiwanis **Formula** program. This program focuses on the idea of recruitment and strategies to upgrade and enhance recruitment. The program has the following sections:

- ❑ **Love it:** "Love it" addresses the fact that Kiwanians have unique reasons why they became and remain members. It asks members to draw from what they love about Kiwanis to talk about Kiwanis with others.
- ❑ **Share it:** "Share it" component of The Formula encourages members to spread the word about their clubs.
- ❑ **Live it:** "Live it" is what happens when Kiwanis members love their Kiwanis experience and, by sharing it with others, strengthen their clubs and, subsequently, increase opportunities for incredible community service.

I would suggest Circle K International continue similar efforts such as our **My CKI Story** page which showcases current members' experiences within the organization. Additionally, I would suggest that CKI begins a new campaign within our marketing focused on **Why CKI?** This would serve as a way to showcase why current membership loves CKI, lives CKI, and shares CKI with their friends and peer groups.



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